

I Am Emotionally Intelligent and Ready to Mentor!

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Abstract:

This paper is based on work performed around a previously published chapter (Crumpton, 2015) that was the foundation for a program developed for mentoring library and information science professionals. The concept involved creating emotionally-intelligent mentors that can guide mentees through career processes such as promotion and tenure, and influence new professional through various professional organizations such, as state or local chapters or regional institutes that include mentoring as a component. The paper and poster will cover the basics of emotional intelligence (EI) as it relates to skills needed by mentors in a mentoring relationship, formal or informally. Utilizing principles from current literature related to mentoring, EI skills needed for a mentoring relationship are presented and demonstrated. Mentoring is making an investment into a relationship, which is why having an emotionally-intelligent mentor can be critical to the success of any mentoring program or relationship. Emphasis will be placed on teaching and ensuring that mentors have good emotional intelligence skills by exhibiting strong self-awareness in their ability to motivate and influence others. This self-awareness should be developed into social awareness skills that allows mentors to provide an impact to mentees beyond their own needs but focuses on what is best for the mentee. A case study included in this presentation will focus on librarians from North Carolina who have been trained as mentors, both for their institutions and in guiding others through career advancement and as graduates working with new participants in the North Carolina Library Association Leadership Institute.

Keywords: emotion intelligence | EI | mentorship | mentoring relationships

Article:

*****Note: Full text of article below**

I Am Emotionally Intelligent and Ready to Mentor!

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This paper is based on work performed around a previously published chapter (Crumpton, 2015) that was the foundation for a program developed for mentoring library and information science professionals. The concept involved creating emotionally-intelligent mentors that can guide mentees through career processes such as promotion and tenure, and influence new professional through various professional organizations such, as state or local chapters or regional institutes that include mentoring as a component. The paper and poster will cover the basics of emotional intelligence (EI) as it relates to skills needed by mentors in a mentoring relationship, formal or informally. Utilizing principles from current literature related to mentoring, EI skills needed for a mentoring relationship are presented and demonstrated. Mentoring is making an investment into a relationship, which is why having an emotionally-intelligent mentor can be critical to the success of any mentoring program or relationship. Emphasis will be placed on teaching and ensuring that mentors have good emotional intelligence skills by exhibiting strong self-awareness in their ability to motivate and influence others. This self-awareness should be developed into social awareness skills that allows mentors to provide an impact to mentees beyond their own needs but focuses on what is best for the mentee. A case study included in this presentation will focus on librarians from North Carolina who have been trained as mentors, both for their institutions and in guiding others through career advancement and as graduates working with new participants in the North Carolina Library Association Leadership Institute.

Introduction

Mentoring can be an important aspect in developing a professional career path and/or becoming oriented to new organizations or positions. The process of mentoring can be formal or informal and can be beneficial in many ways. Studies have linked the relationship that can be formed between mentees and mentors to be important in the creation of new knowledge, through the inspiration and relationship novice persons have to individuals who have the patience and skills to guide others. In fact, the process itself can have a larger impact than the actual content reviewed. It is also important to recognize that mentoring programs need to change as circumstances and needs change.

Developing emotional intelligent skills prior to, or as part of a mentoring program will benefit both mentor and mentee. Then as a team, they can work to provide guidance and develop opportunities for persons in all aspects of professional life, which includes embracing the values of informal, peer and group mentoring. Benefits or returns gained from investing into a mentoring program can include: improved skills for the mentor who has gained knowledge themselves in the process, improved skills of the mentee, who is more efficient in the performance of their job, increased retention and reduces turnover, and a stronger foundation for succession planning activities from which institutional knowledge is protected and organizational leadership can be sustained.

The North Carolina Library Association has created and provides leadership development for its members through a week-long leadership institute which involves participant selection through an application process. This model has been tweaked over the years to provide a more enhanced experience by utilizing participants who have completed the program to mentor the next cohort of participants. In adding this component to the participant leadership experience, it has been recognized that these new mentors would need emotional intelligence skills beyond what their initial institute experience.

Applying Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is having the ability to understand and manage your emotions intelligently, for both self-management and working with others. This relates to having a clear and creative point of view for managing relationships and stress, meeting challenges and learning to seek positive outcomes. In the workplace, this is important for moving organizational goals forward and providing positive and productive workplace environments. Within the leadership institute the foundation of emotional intelligence skills was taught drawing on the works of Daniel Goleman and Travis Bradberry.

In a mentoring relationship, these skills can be critical for successfully achieving the goals intended for both a mentee and mentor. Goleman's early work laid out a model of emotional intelligence with four areas of ability which he labeled as leadership skills (Goleman, 1998). Other researchers have published similar versions of these abilities and the key to utilizing this concept to make a difference in the workplace is to fully understand emotions within yourself and others. This includes the physical feelings, thoughts and behaviors associated with the emotions, being aware of differences in emotions and how they can change circumstantially (Hasson, 2014). Other considerations can include recognizing cultural and heritage differences in how people perceive certain emotional reactions.

Later changes to the content delivery at the institute included Caruso and Rees (2018), A Leader's Guide to Solving Challenges with Emotional Intelligence and the use of emotional intelligence blueprints for mapping emotions. This was especially important for potential future mentors in learning how to match and developed meaning in their emotions as well as recognize them in others.

Emotional Competences and Traits

Goleman considered emotional competence (Goleman, 1998), which indicates the ability to learn skills that impact performance with emotional intelligence elements. He goes on to recognize how these skills can be learned and useful within a working environment.

The field of emotional intelligence research has become quite large in business and industry with ongoing research in many areas. A look at other professions and their research is useful in the study of mentorship within library and information science environments. For example, a study of emotional intelligence attributes (Butler & Chinowsky, 2006) about the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership behavior, did indeed prove that a relationship exists. This study addressed leadership behavior types; such as transformational, transactional and laissez-faire, using a variety of emotional intelligence attributes and research variables to make this determination. This called for mentors who could displayed and enact emotional intelligence behaviors.

In a mentoring relationship, mentors should have a core set of skills and knowledge which is intended to be shared with prospective mentees. But additional training for the mentors, that includes self-regulated aspects of understanding their role, control of their own emotional reactions and being motivated to put forth the effort, can provide a much higher quality to the experience. This intrinsic motivation, or being excited about being a mentor, helps create an environment of success for the goals of the mentoring relationship (Lassk and Shepard, 2013), by providing a creative allowance for doing what needs to be done.

Developing Mentors

Loosely defined, mentoring is the sharing of knowledge, advice or reinforcement of support related to a relationship between two or more people, usually in the workplace. However; it is not always just about the workplace, mentoring can be formal or informal, work related or not. For this paper's purpose mentoring is work related, primarily in an academic library setting, and has goals and objectives related to professional creativity and success. Mentoring can be individual, in groups or shared efforts throughout an organization.

The need for mentoring activities can stem from a variety of issues, both personal for individuals and large scale to cover organizational needs. These needs can be technology related, mentoring new skills with changes in technology, leadership related, in terms of developing future leaders within the profession or situational, for example; mentoring persons with financial responsibilities during tough economic times (Crumpton, 2011). Diversity initiatives and generational issues might also require mentoring to create relationships with positive and tangible outcomes.

Mentoring can also be part of an organization's succession planning strategy and is a cost-effective way to identify, develop and retain talent, skills, and knowledge. Creating a formal mentoring program for an organization as it is challenged, financially or competitively, provides an avenue for strategic review for environmental scanning or positioning of people and services. Informally, this works on an individual basis as potential mentees look for experienced incumbents who can help them get ahead by learning and expanding their perspectives for other opportunities.

Mentoring is meant to be a purposeful learning activity, no matter what form it takes, or who initiates it. The relationship should be built so that mentors help in building capacity in their mentees or protégés, through advising, coaching, modeling, and sharing of knowledge. Learning can occur from both mentors and mentees and should be approached as a partnership with common goals. Over time, mentoring can mature into deeper relationships that have connections with other professionals to expand the knowledge base.

The process of mentoring can go by several names or conceptual labels. Traditionally mentoring is considered the best way to pass along skills and traits of various professions and crafts through apprenticeships. Modern mentoring supports the skill development of newly trained individuals by supporting their new knowledge and helping them achieve the best practical application of that knowledge at that time. The mentor is also helping shape the creation of new knowledge by the mentee by providing the inspiration and motivation to the trainee to move thing forward and achieve higher goals than previously established (Seritan, 2005).

Within the library profession, the associations that provide and foster professional development opportunities also create mentoring programs to promote conversation and guidance between experienced members of the profession and newer, less experienced members. This also promotes diversity and inclusion initiatives by creating groups of interest and support for multi-cultural and ethnic minority recruitment efforts. Other examples of mentoring needs within the profession include the developing of academic credentials, such as achieving tenure, and recruitment of leadership to replace retiring leaders, which is a professional concern (Zhang, Deyoe & Matveyeva, 2007).

Learning to be a Mentor

Reading and knowing what emotional intelligence traits are but learning how to apply and use them can be very different things. Libraries are very diverse environments with people from a variety of backgrounds, education and age grouping. A basic starting point for learning emotional intelligence traits that can transfer into good mentoring skills is considering transformative learning initiatives in secondary education.

Nelson and Low (2007) addressed how transformative learning helped students learn how to manage themselves, form productive relationships and generally behave in a wise and responsible manner. At the foundation of this is the development of the emotional mind by learning emotional intelligence skills. Mentoring through transformative learning is about the development of behaviors through an experiential leaning process. Nelson and Low's work with students proved that by focusing on emotional intelligence skills first, other activities and processes became more effective.

The knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's) shown are general skills or orientations that mentors should be expected to have beyond their primary responsibilities. Having a "big picture" point of view enables a mentee to see their role in the larger context of the work environment. The functions of career and psychosocial activities demonstrate the impact that a mentor can have on a mentee in many parts of their life.

By developing these abilities, one gains more control over their own emotions to react appropriately and according to the situation or response needed. One also becomes more sensitive to other people, their emotions, and reactions to offset or blend as needed.

Building Strategic Relations

While good mentoring programs can help people achieve goals and objectives, the social aspect of emotional intelligence helps people learn how to build relationships that are strategic in nature. A study at the University of Nebraska Omaha (Kobe, Reiter-Palmon & Rickers, 2001) found a positive correlation with emotional intelligence and social intelligence. This study was significant for addressing leadership aspects of building relationships by studying organizational behaviors in a social context.

Developing the relationship between mentors and mentees is critical to the success of the program. Cooper and Wheeler (2007), in developing their program for nursing, identified three key ingredients for success: Why, how, and commitment. They felt that a solid understanding of the why of the relationship exists, knowing how of the relationship works, was essential to having the commitment to the success of the relationship. Their why, how, and commitment elements were then drawn into five phases for implementation; purpose, engagement, planning, emergence and completion. This also affords that many mentoring relationships will act like a project and be completed once specific goals are achieved. At this point, mentees might strategically seek difference mentorship to achieve their next set of goals, which in this case is moving beyond the leadership institute's core mission.

Other Considerations, Costs of Programs and Virtual Mentoring

The diverse nature of mentoring programs in libraries and library associations across the country demonstrates the eclectic nature of mentoring needs. Libraries with high turnover might have greater need for onboarding type of mentoring programs, while libraries with rank and tenure might have programs tailored to coach and support librarians striving to achieve those goals. Formal programs cost money, both in dollars spent, time invested, and effort put forth. Having a cost-benefit analysis (Villar & Strong, 2007) of any formal mentoring program will provide documentation for tracking and justification for the investment. It can also add credibility to a program by providing a financial value and help with decision making. Some of the costs to consider would include (Crompton, 2014), time, training needed, logistical costs, intrinsic value of not having a formal program. Although these costs and benefits are highly subjective, they can be documented and reported out to provide value to the process. Villar and Strong (2007) recommend these cost and benefits be viewed over time for the most efficient analysis.

Other options include social media sites that have places for chats, email, message boards and group discussions. Having a mentoring relationship virtually can be more cost effective but also invokes different skills and potentially different emotions

in the participants. Some situations might work out better by having a broader range of options without physical constraints like distance (travel) or need for space and food.

Physical or virtual, expensive or not, formal mentoring programming should still have the investment of preparatory time to have resources, materials, expectations and concerns addressed prior to starting a program. Part of this preparation should be an understanding of how emotions will play out in the proposed arrangement. Studies have shown that emotions do play a part in human-computer activities (Lopatovska & Arapakis, 2011) and should be considered a factor in developing any kind of virtual mentoring program. Guidance and training on emotional intelligent skills could be a good starting point.

What Can Go Wrong?

In the introduction to Scott Adam's latest collection of Dilbert cartoons (Adams, 2013), the author refers to not being good at mentoring. He elaborates on reasons why including not having developed the proper relationship with potential mentees, not saying the right things, and not having confidence in his own accomplishments to the point of sharing sage advice for others to pursue successful habits to be accomplished. Adams is, of course, taking a light-hearted look at mentorship and some of the drawbacks, but, mentoring activities that aren't purposefully driven, with the right components in place, can do more harm than good.

The need and use of emotional intelligence skills are also critical for reaping the benefits of good mentoring. In cases where mentoring is meant to improve standards, raise performance create succession planning avenues for future growth, not having emotional intelligence skills can become a detriment to achieving any of those objectives. Program coordinators and administrators including potential mentors themselves should embrace learning emotional intelligence skills as part of mentor development. What is sought here is to strengthen self-awareness skills of mentors to avoid the Dunning-Kruger effect.

The Dunning-Kruger effect (Sheldon, Dunning & Ames, 2013) is a phenomenon in which the expertise or skill needed to judge one on performance, in this case as a mentor, is the same expertise or skill needed to produce performance. Thus, mentors with poor performances will fail to recognize deficiencies in their own performance, even in a difference setting or role. This study of the Dunning-Kruger (Cite Year) effect makes the case for emotional intelligence training for managers, or for these purposes' mentors, to motivate new behaviors toward performance through self-realization of performance deficiencies before their expertise is shared with mentee candidates.

As mentoring has grown over the years as a modern means for knowledge transfer and ongoing development of the workforce, recognition of negative or poor aspects of mentoring relationships is vital. Control over how a mentoring program is working becomes an organizational responsibility so that the effort and investments made will be fruitful.

Trends and Future implications

Managing change is also a critical need for mentoring activities. Intentional change is best managed when a mentor is provided to provide objective feedback and guidance as one or many go through the change process (Klare, Behney, & Kenney, 2014). Even highly intelligent people can miss emotional cues that mentoring can address.

Chun et al. (2010) conducted a study on emotional intelligence and formal mentoring programs. Their focus on the impact of trust in these relationships not only correlated with the degree of emotional intelligence by mentors and mentees but implied trends within workplace cultures that will prove significant in the future. They recognized that challenges in the workplace with social issues such as multiple gender considerations, race, and culture or ethnicity concerns will increase the need for emotional intelligence training and education for organizational leadership.

We all need advice and help navigating a complex world and academic libraries recently have had the added burden of tough economic times that impact and influence career planning or skill development. Therefore, the need for mentorship has never been greater. Not all mentoring is the same and, as an individual, each person needs to make the most of what they have while strategically developing those relationships that will do the most good.

Conclusion

This discussion is about the importance of emotional intelligence skills in the mentoring process. Having an emotionally intelligent mentor is critical to the success of the relationship for all participants. In a formal program, skill training for emotionally intelligent skills is essential be to include in the prep work. In an informal program, knowing how to manage yourself and build the strategic relationships that are important for you is also essential to meet your goals and career ambitions.

Academic libraries need to cultivate a mentoring culture in which senior librarians are positively influencing the future of the profession by mentoring new professionals. Professional association initiatives such as the leadership institute for NCLA is one vehicle for developing this culture. Everyone is not cut out to be a mentor, but those that do also reap the rewards of learning something new. And beware of the pitfalls that can be encountered, good mentoring is not a given, it takes effort and persistent.

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